



Sister Maurice Okoroji, Director of the Harmony House Early Learning Center, slaps hands with a youngster after he correctly answers a question.

## Sisters Faithfully Serving at New Community

One can find them throughout New Community Corp.--caring for the sick at the nursing home, assisting the elderly in the senior buildings, or working with families and children affiliated with the corporation's two pre-school programs. A total of 29 Catholic sisters, representing eight different orders, are faithfully serving in a variety of roles including nurses, social workers, social service coordinators, family workers and pastoral care coordinators.

"They are beautiful. They are always very kind and give you a nice, beautiful smile," said Reathel Alberta Williamson, a resident of the NCC Extended Care Center, New Community's 180-bed skilled nursing center.

The majority of the Sisters hail from the African countries of Nigeria, Tanzania and Kenya. One, Sister Paula, is from Sri Lanka.

Sister Nnaedoziem Charity Okoroafor, who belongs to the Order called Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy, is from Nigeria and has been working at

the NCC Extended Care Center since 2006, starting out as a certified nurses assistant and now working as a licensed practical nurse since graduating from NCC's School of Practical Nursing two years ago.

"It's good. I like taking care of people when they're sick," said Sister Charity, who is 37.

Sister Maurice Okoroji, age 39, is director of the Harmony House Early Learning Center. A former teacher at St. Rose of Lima School, she holds a master's degree in educational administration and supervision and a bachelor's in English Education from Caldwell College.

"It has always been my vision to work with and around children, with the conviction that they are our future, and whatever I give them, is what they will give back to our diversified society," said Sister Maurice, who is with the Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy. According to Monsignor William J. Linder, founder of New Community,

## SACRIFICE

*"No man can have greater love than this: to lay down his life for those he loves."*

**John 15:13**

*"Only a life lived for others is worth living."*

**Albert Einstein**

*"There is no higher religion than human service. To work for the common good is the greatest creed."*

**Woodrow Wilson**

*"To gain that which is worth having, it may be necessary to lose everything else."*

**Bernadette Devlin**

*"Those things which are precious are saved only by sacrifice."*

**David Kenyon Webster**

For Information on Social Investment, please contact:

**Rev. Msgr. William J. Linder.**

**Tel: 973-497-4415**

**Fax 973-482-2137**

**233 West Market Street,  
Newark, NJ 07103**

**[linder@newcommunity.org](mailto:linder@newcommunity.org),  
[www.newcommunity.org](http://www.newcommunity.org)**



## Sisters Faithfully Serving at New Community (cont'd)



Sister Louis Marie Nnanabu gives medication to Ronald Garrison, a participant in NCC's Adult Medical Day Care Program.

the service the Sisters provide throughout the New Community network is invaluable. He started recruiting Sisters from Africa about four years ago to work in NCC's senior buildings and at the nursing home.

"The African culture is so committed to the elderly," he said. Monsignor also noted that the sisters' employment with New Community contributes to economic development in their home countries, as they send money back to help support a range of programs, including those involving the elderly and orphans.

Sister Louis Marie Nnanabu, 38, with the Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy, is a registered nurse assigned to NCC's Adult Medical Day Care program. The network provides housing for her and the other sisters in several buildings located near the St. Rose of Lima Parish in Newark. Sister Francisca Opara, 47, is a social worker in the

NCC Adult Medical Day Care Program. A member of the Order, Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, she came to Newark in 2005 from Nigeria, first working in the kitchen of the Extended Care Center while studying social work as an undergraduate at Seton Hall University. She is now pursuing her master's degree in psychology as she works in the Adult Medical Day Care Program.

"I want to deal with the whole person," she said. "Some people have a lot of things inside and they just want someone to listen to them," she said.

Sister Innocentia Emenogu, 47, the social worker at NCC Manor Senior and a member of the Holy Family Sisters of the Needy, said while the work can be challenging, she loves what she does.

"That's why I became a nun. It's my mission to work with the seniors and the underprivileged," she said. "It brings a lot of satisfaction and fulfillment."



Sister Charity, a licensed practical nurse at the New Community Extended Care Center, offers words of comfort to resident Reathel Alberta Williamson.

## Social Investment

*Despite the difficult economic times, New Community Corporation is still on the move, continuing to serve.*

- NCC Family Resource Center assisted 4,280 families and individuals in 2009
- NCC has more than 700 students enrolled in its charter school, two early learning centers and after-school programs.
- NCC Essex Valley Visiting Nurse Association served 2,603 individuals in 2009
- NCC Hispanic Development Corporation served more than 9,842 clients in 2009
- NCC serves nearly 1,200 seniors who need services such as home health, wellness care and meals-on-wheels

*Please continue to help us meet these continuing pressing needs of the community we serve.*



## Meet ShopRite Associate Nanette Simmons



For more than a year, Nanette Simmons has been working as a cashier at the Livingston ShopRite. She graduated from New Community's Partners in Training/ShopRite Training Program in January 2009 and in a month's time was hired.

"She's like a diamond in the rough," said the store's front end manager, Mary Ellen Gawronski. "She is an exceptional employee who is extremely motivated and dedicated."

In fact, Simmons is often called to work when she is not scheduled because her superiors know she is reliable.

"I work four to six days per week," she said. "When they call me, I go unless I have something important to do, like a doctor's appointment."

Just one conversation with Simmons is all it takes to conclude she is not a native of New Jersey.

"I meet a lot of different people and everybody seems to know that I am from Virginia. They can tell by my accent," she said.

They can also tell from her manners, something New Jersey residents are not generally known for. Simmons is originally from Emporia, Virginia, where she managed a convenience store for almost 13 years.

"It gave me experience in cashiering," she said. "I love the public and meeting different folks."

It was in September of 2008 that Simmons moved to New Jersey to help care for an ill aunt in Newark. She immediately began looking for work, but was not successful, so ended up on welfare. She was ultimately referred to New Community's Workforce Development

Program, where she entered a Welfare-to-Work Initiative and was introduced to the ShopRite Training Program.

"I was amazed. I had never seen a set-up like this of a mini-supermarket," she said, referring to the facility on Morris Avenue in Newark that serves as the program's training center.

Equipped with the latest computerized cash registers and shelves stocked with non-perishable grocery items, the training center is where Associates, or trainees, also learn about every transaction they will face on the job. They learn how to handle everything from personal checks to food stamps.

"The program shows you exactly what you need to know before you even get on the job. When you finally get into the workforce, there isn't too much left to learn," said Simmons, who has a 16-year-old daughter at home and a 23-year-old son who still lives in Virginia.

Customer service is a big part of training in the New Community program and Simmons said her work as a store manager in Virginia helped prepare her for dealing with all types of people.

"I try to be kind to everyone," she said.

## NCC On the Move



Zhan LaQuer-Douglas, left, a youth support specialist and case manager at NCC's Harmony House transitional living facility, explains how she and the staff help provide residents with the tools they need to become self-sufficient. She is speaking to a group from Broadway United Methodist Church of Indianapolis, Ind., who recently took a tour of New Community Corporation and its many programs. The group is shown in the secure courtyard/playground area at Harmony House.



## Zhan LaQuer-Douglas



As a young girl growing up in Newark's Hayes Homes public housing project, Zhan LaQuer-Douglas was surrounded by poverty. Yet, she knew it was possible for her life to take a different path.

"I could have been the same statistic, but I wanted more for myself. Furthering my education was important," said LaQuer-Douglas, now a youth support specialist and case manager for New Community's Harmony House transitional living facility.

After graduating from Newark's Arts High School in 1985, she entered William Paterson University in Wayne, where she studied sociology and music education. Upon graduation in 1990, she worked as a counselor for the summer camp at St. James AME Church in Newark before becoming a church choir director.

It was an employee of Harmony House who thought LaQuer-Douglas would be a good fit for the program and recommended her to the facility back in 2006.

She has never looked back and says her role in giving homeless families the tools they need to once again become self-sufficient couldn't be more rewarding.

"You really need to have compassion to want to work with people and see them better," said LaQuer-Douglas, 43, of Belleville, who is the mother of a 12-year old daughter, Arianna. "That's the greatest thing; to love your neighbor as yourself and you will want more for the person next to you."

Utilizing New Community's vast network of services, LaQuer-Douglas points clients in the direction of New Community's Workforce Development programs, which are aimed at not just training people for jobs, but careers.

The programs include the School of Practical Nursing, the Youth and Adult Automotive Training Center, the School of Culinary Arts and ShopRite Training

Program. Other individuals first enroll in a GED class at the Workforce Development Center to obtain their high school equivalency diploma.

"We're seeing people now who never thought they would be in a situation like this," she explained. "They have lost their jobs, but they are used to working and are not here for a long period of time. They want to make a better life for themselves and their children and they bounce back."

At Harmony House, residents are offered on-site child care so they can pursue their goals. Counseling is also offered through NCC's Family Service Bureau.

"We don't always know the struggles people endured before they came to Harmony House," LaQuer-Douglas said. "Maybe they weren't able to care for their children properly they just need someone to talk to."

When someone comes back to say 'thank-you' and tell LaQuer-Douglas the difference Harmony House made in their lives, it is simply a reinforcement of why she decided to get into this line of work. Recently, a former resident returned and brought a friend who needed the type of services Harmony House offers.

"I'm just grateful for the opportunity to be here," LaQuer-Douglas said. "I just enjoy what I do."

## OUR MISSION

To help residents of inner cities improve the quality of their lives to reflect individual, God-given dignity and personal achievement.